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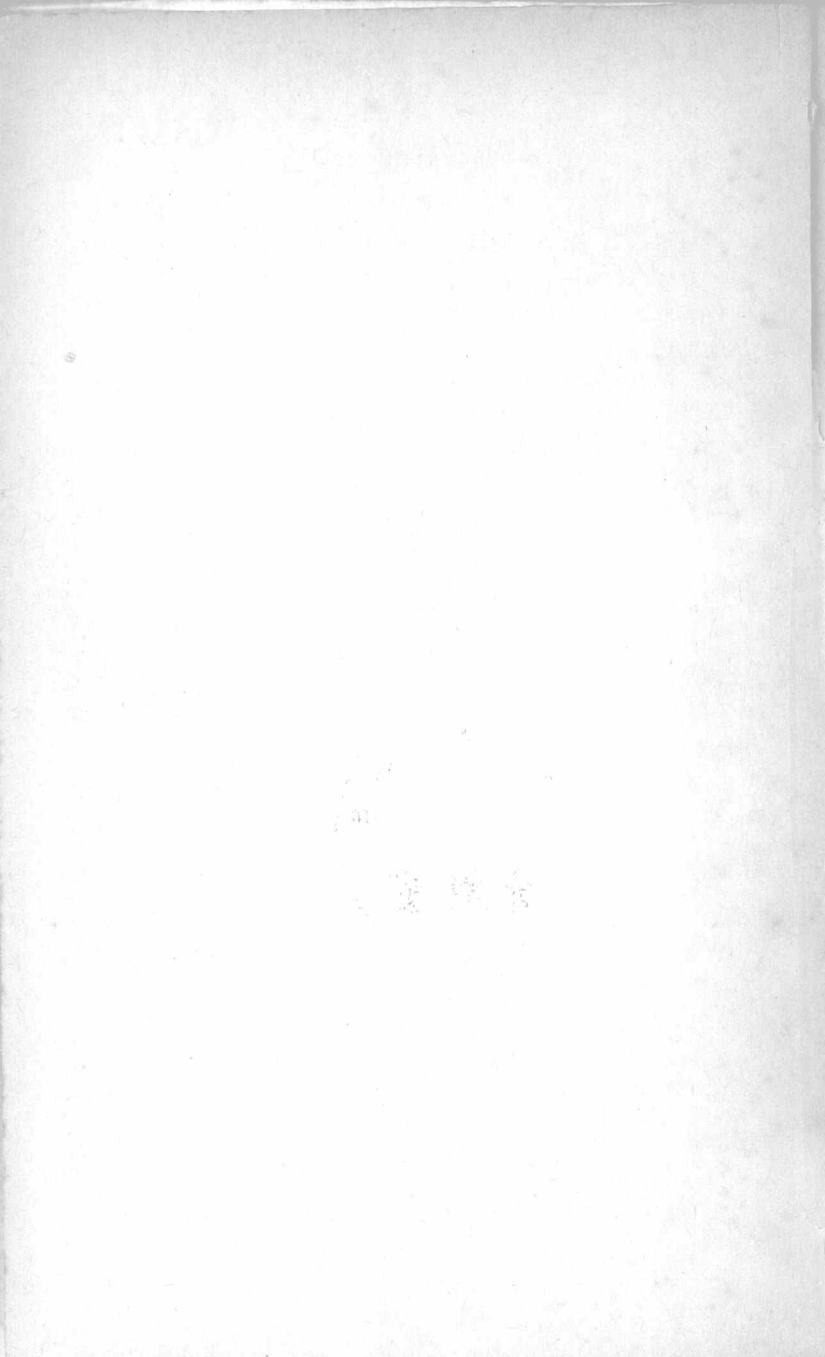
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美小说

BY LOVE POSSESSED

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# BY LOVE POSSESSED

—  
*Thereby to see the minutes how they run -  
How many make the hour full complete,  
How many hours bring about the day,  
How many days will finish up the year,  
How many years a mortal man may live.*

HENRY VI



PENGUIN BOOKS

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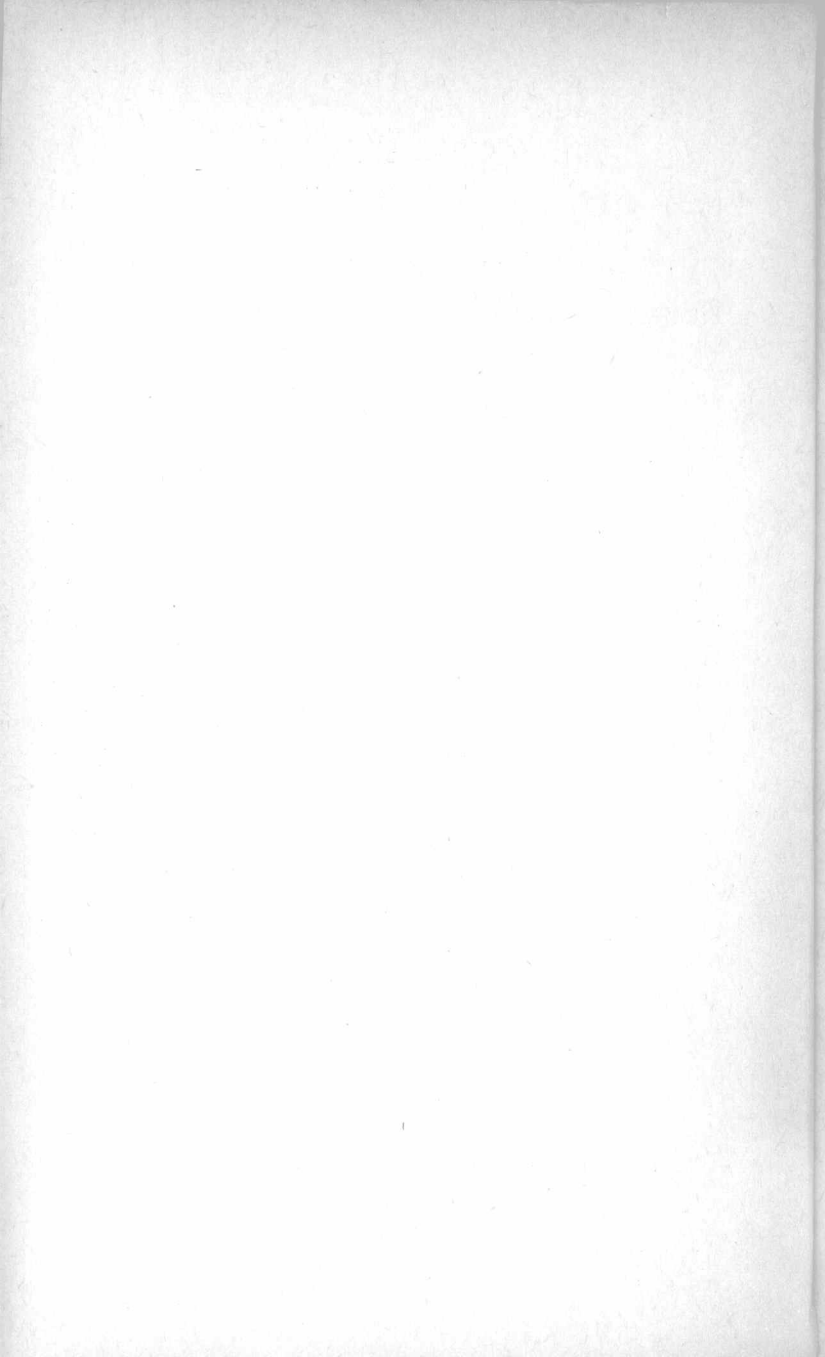
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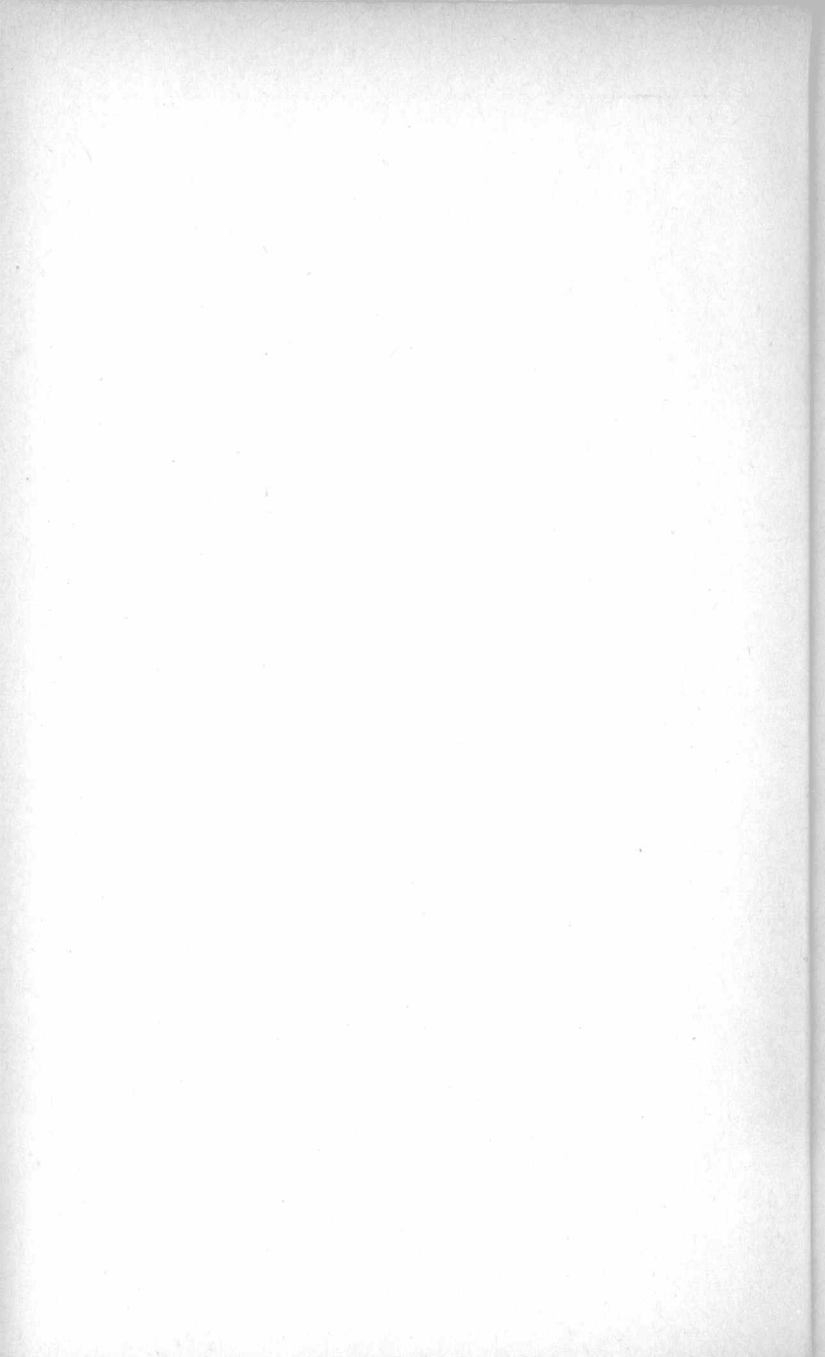


*Part One*

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DRUMS AFAR OFF





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## ONE

LOVE conquers all – *omnia vincit amor*, said the gold scroll in a curve beneath the dial of the old French gilt clock. To the dial's right, a nymph, her head on her arm, drowsed, largely undraped, at the mouth of a gold grotto where perhaps she lived. To the dial's left, a youth, by his crook and the pair of lambs with him, a shepherd, had taken cover. Parting fronds of gold vegetation, he peeped at the sleeping beauty. On top of the dial, and all unnoticed by the youth, a smiling cupid perched, bow bent, about to loose an arrow at the peeper's heart. While Arthur Winner viewed with faint familiar amusement this romantic grouping, so graceful and so absurd, the clock struck three.

The struck notes succeeded themselves in the quiet room with a pleasant silver tone. When his mother got up, Arthur Winner, too, got up. Left alone, he remained standing, thoughtful in a pose of habit. He held his tall, big-limbed body, whose suit of tan linen was rather wrinkled by the hot day's wearing, erect. He carried his head, in its good proportion made more distinguished by being now for the most part bald, at a reflective angle – composed face lifted a little; strong-boned chin raised, as though he scanned, scrutinous and unhurried, the middle distance; big beaked nose up, as though to scent the air. On the air hung, in fact, a faint spiciness, a barely apparent fragrance of potpourri given off by a Canton jar on a coffee table in front of the couch. The room was mostly shadowed. Big maples on the lawn grew close, shading the house; yet the September afternoon's lowered sun had now begun to slant an occasional beam through their branches. The tall screened windows, open on the warm day, admitted these declining rays. Bright, they came and went as the leaves stirred, casting themselves across the polished dark floor.

Sight of the old gilt clock had made Arthur Winner think of his father – indeed, the room was full of such mementoes. A little-disturbed museum, its collection, informal and unassuming, preserved evidences of that many-sided mind, of the grasp and scope of interests, of perceptions so unobtrusive as to be nearly private,

of quiet amusements and quiet enjoyments. Seeking Arthur Winner Senior's monument, you could look around you. You could ask yourself, for example, how many lawyers – or, to give the point proper force, how many small-town lawyers, born and brought up in a fairly-to-be-called rural county seat like Brocton – would, fifty or more years ago, have had the interest – let alone, the taste, the eye – to pick over, unaffected by then current ideas of what was fine or beautiful, of what was rare or valuable, the then next thing to junk – the secondhand, the old-fashioned, the discarded – and select, exchanging a few dollars for them, exactly the items that the antique trade (at that time hardly born) was going to look on as prizes half a century later. Would you guess one in a thousand, or one in ten thousand?

From the room beyond, Arthur Winner heard his mother's movements. She was in search of a list she had made of the things she meant to speak to him about, things she did not want to forget. That she should then forget where she put the list of things not to forget had, she was quite aware, touches of both humour and pathos. Liking the one in connexion with herself as little as the other, his mother indignantly summoned her forces. She was compelling herself to an organized effort of recall, a determined methodical review of what she had been doing, on the not-bad chance that she would be shown suddenly where the list must be. As, in her seventies, had become her practice, she spoke aloud, relating what she could remember, interpolating comment as comment seemed to her called for.

She said loud enough for Arthur Winner to hear: 'I know I had it just before Maud went out. Where was I? Upstairs? I don't think so. And she wanted me to speak to Arthur about her bonds. And I put that down – ' Her voice was carefully, cultivated clear; yet from time to time some slightest involuntary tremble of the old muscles of the larynx put into the distinct words a hint of quaver. She said: 'It's Luella's afternoon off. So she came in to ask me if she could bring me tea before she left – who would want tea at half past two? Still, we're fortunate to have her; though she's not very clean.' Speaking still louder, meaning him not to fail to hear – perhaps a realization that the clock had struck a moment ago prompted her – she said: 'If I don't find it, he'll start saying he has to leave; and I might not see him again for days – '

With compunction, Arthur Winner must realize that his

mother stated there, advertently or not, one truth about these lists she usually had ready for him, about the innocent, even perhaps unconscious stratagem. The more things she noted down, made sure she would speak of, the longer she could legitimately keep him. That she might forget something important was not the danger; if she did, when she remembered, she had only to pick up the telephone. The danger was that, his duty too quickly done, the too-few things coming to her mind at the moment all mentioned, taken care of, he would have no reason to stay. He would be going; when, if she'd planned better, he could have been caused to remain longer. She called: 'Do you hear me, Arthur?'

'Perfectly,' Arthur Winner said.

'You didn't say anything. I suppose it means you're in a hurry.'

'Not particularly,' Arthur Winner said. 'I told Clarissa I'd try to be out by five -'

'Well, you must, then! Give her my love. And Ann. Ann came to see me - did I tell you? - one day last week. We had a nice time. Suddenly, she seems quite grown up - more than fifteen, I mean. But I would be glad if you could persuade her not to call me Granny. That's quite new. I imagine she got it from a friend, or read it in a book. She's at an imitative age. Now, what was I -'

Arthur Winner said: 'You're looking for your list, Mother.'

'Don't be impertinent, Arthur,' she said, almost sharply. 'I've not entirely lost my wits, whatever you may think. Now, I believe I *did* leave it upstairs -'

Arthur Winner said: 'Would you like me to look?'

'No. How would you know where to look?' He could hear her steps pattering rapidly into the hall; and he said: 'Don't rush around. It's not good for you. Take your time.'

She answered: 'All very well to say that, but how can I take my time when you're in such a hurry, when I know you'll say you have to go in a minute?' However, reaching the stairs, she began to mount them with careful slowness. She called out: 'Your father was *never* in a hurry. He said that when you saw a lawyer in a hurry you saw a man who didn't know his business. You should be more like him.'

'I believe that,' Arthur Winner said.

The remark was, indeed, his father's; yet this use might seem to show that some quality of serious directness in his mother's thought, her natural way of viewing things in terms of yea and

nay, white or black, so or not so, made her miss his father's whole meaning – the dry overtone; the sidelong ironic look at the law's infinite utilizable resources of obstruction and postponement, and the wily, knowing lawyer's habit of profiting from them. Arthur Winner said: 'The truth is, I'm only now starting to see how well father knew his business. He and Noah Tuttle made quite a firm in the old days. Getting old myself, I can realize how good they were.'

As though shocked, his mother said: 'Arthur!' Clearly she had stopped on the stairs. 'You're absurd to think of yourself as old! Fifty-four's no age!'

Laughing, Arthur Winner said: 'It's kind of you to reassure me; but I don't see how I could be called young. Moreover, I'm glad to be where I am. It occurs to me that youth's a kind of infirmity. You don't have the use of your logical faculties – or, at least, most of us don't.'

His mother said: 'Well, you *are* like your father – in many, many ways, Arthur. I often notice. He was – ' She interrupted herself. Taking this turn, her thought, it could be guessed, revived a neglected, most of the time dead, grief. The force of grief, the active shock of losing, was gone. Grief recurred as a forlornness grown of the loss. Now that she thought of it, what, in fact, was this life of hers but a staying, a waiting solitary, without real use, while death hesitated over the multiple choice of ways to kill her? She called, beginning to go upstairs again: 'You didn't say who else was at the lake, Arthur. Tell me when I get back.'

With a wish to change his thoughts, too, Arthur Winner moved. He crossed the room to an ample *étagère* between the side windows. On the middle shelf reposed a music box of burled walnut veneer intricately inlaid with mother-of-pearl patterns. Arthur Winner lifted the lid. Not sure anything would happen, he depressed several times the handle that wound the spring. The little control lever's nickel plate was pitted. Pushing hard, he managed to push it to *play*. A jar of cogs, forced, creaking and dubious, together, sounded. Beneath the inner lid's oblong of plate glass, the tarnished cylinder bristling with pins stirred, stopped, quivered, started again. In the room a ghost of music materialized. Spaced apart, elegiac and slow, note on faint plunking note formed a pensive tune: *'Tis the last rose of summer left blooming alone. All her lovely companions . . .*

Arthur Winner's father, poking (how many years ago?) through the jumble of some secondhand store (who would give houseroom to an old music box? Up-to-date parlours had phonographs with a horn), spied one day the elegant veneer, smudged and dull with dust. Removing whatever was piled on top, he noted the much dirtied, fancy, and delicate inlay. Smiling to himself, he lifted the lid and peered at the mechanism. On his way out, he dropped a casual, take-it-or-leave-it offer. The shopkeeper was sure to take it. An expert perception, an aptitude for estimating people, their situations, their intentions, seemed always to let Arthur Winner Senior know what *would* be just enough. In the case of the music box, the offer need not be much. Obviously the old piece of junk had been there some time. It didn't even work; and where, after all these years, could you find anyone able to fix it?

Arthur Winner Senior, unconcerned, laid down his dollar or two. Someone to fix a music box would not be far to seek. He himself could fix anything; just – you might say – as he could play the violin, and not badly; or, getting out a box of colours and a palette, paint in oils an excellent likeness of whatever he set himself to paint. He could root slips or cuttings, and graft fruit trees. He tied dry flies with unexampled dexterity. Given a setter puppy to his liking, he could train a gun dog certain to take field trial ribbons. He could bowl (sometimes) a three hundred game; and he could beat (any time) almost anyone at croquet.

Getting the music box home, Arthur Winner Senior would remove the works. Patiently, with the loving care of a man who understood wood, he did what mending the veneer needed and restored the original fine finish. Some rainy Sunday afternoon, he would then attend to the mechanism. His neat-featured, narrow, but strongly shaped face thoughtful, Arthur Winner Senior, with the loving care of a man who understood machinery, proceeded to take the works apart. The trouble soon became plain. If adjustments were faulty, he saw how to correct them; if this or that were broken, he devised a repair; if a part were missing, he found (or, even, made) something that would serve the missing part's purpose. Reassembled, the music box did not fail to play.

Remembering such accomplishments of his father's, so impressive in their variety, Arthur Winner could, of course, now see that they were not the separate or unrelated wonder-workings

at which the child or boy once looked open-mouthed. The youth, the young man, might dimly feel their interrelation – that they were the fruits, the natural yield, of a temperament, a mental temper, a special make of mind – yet of course the youth, the young man, could not be equipped to know the thing he felt. Arthur Winner Junior, brought fresh from law school into the office of his father and Noah Tuttle, would need years of being himself a practising lawyer to appreciate his father as a lawyer. To appreciate his father as a person, he would clearly have to wait until time made him wholly adult, gave him the full status – was it given to anyone under forty? – of a grown-up. The slow, seldom painless accreting of self-knowledge must take place before there could be reliable knowledge of other people, before Arthur Winner Junior would recognize, in sharp illuminations of retrospect, his father for what his father was – the nearly unique individual; the Man, if not perfectly, at least predominantly, of Reason.

By his fruits, you knew that man. They, the many accomplishments, were for his father a simple matter. Uncluttered by the irrelevant, uncoloured by the emotional thinker's futile wishing and excesses of false feeling, the mere motion of his father's thought must usually prove synonymous with, the same thing as, perfect rightness. Any end being proposed, the Man of Reason considered means. At a glance, he separated what was to the purpose from what wasn't. Thus simply, he determined the one right way to do the thing. You did it that way; and there you were.

The music box's stiff old spring, no more than part wound, faltered. Hesitating, dying on a last reluctant note or two, the melodious tinkle stopped. The tune had not been finished; yet a silence of served purpose fell. How long since anybody had played it? How long before anybody would play it again? The questions seemed to put themselves, to be put inevitably by the sudden silence, yet these were questions, Arthur Winner, with a certainty of intuition, could realize, of his father's proposing.

Played, the faltering thin music spoke to you, with meanings unqualified by use of words. In a way that words, too specific, too obvious, could not tell you, you were told of time, of what was gone, of what was going, of what was to go. With the tinkle of the far-off notes, with the dying of the half-heard melody, mortality touched the mind. Intimated in the following stillness

were the tears of things – those only tears the Man of Reason stayed to drop. The Man of Reason, from his inward, nearly unbroken solitude, looked out. He regarded the world of men, mostly, in respect to reason, unlike him. Rarely mistaken, he saw them as they were. With hope no higher than became the lonely student of mankind, Arthur Winner Senior, in earth now rotten, speaking to whom it might concern, addressed those surviving him through these things, once his. Somehow, sometime, his messages might or might not reach someone.

Through the silence, the gilt clock ticked on. The clock, too, could be thought of as waiting. It, too, without words, stood ready to say a particular piece. In place of the tears, here was the joke of things. Arthur Winner Senior, dryly smiling, wryly nodding, had appraised the tableau presented by the silly, charming figures. He noted the motto's incontrovertible asseveration. Monkey business proposed the grand truth. The boy, surprising a naked girl, hiding to titillate his thoughts with peeks at her, was himself surprised. The little god was about to take a hand. Indeed, *he* did conquer all. *L'esprit est toujours* – yes, always! – *le dupe du cœur!* So cuddlesome in form, he was the heart, the baby lord and master of the head. His victory was love – love's bliss of thoughtlessness. Love pushed aside the bitter findings of experience. Love knew for a fact what was not a fact; with ease, love believed the unbelievable; love wished and made it so. Moreover, here where love's weakness seemed to be, love's strength resided. Itself all unreality, love was assailed by reality in vain. You might as well wound the loud winds, kill the still-closing waters. Would someone, sometime, read the motto; ponder this figured triumph of unreason, see the joke?

Upstairs, distantly, Arthur Winner's mother was calling. She said: 'Arthur! Can you hear me?'

Going to the hall door, Arthur Winner said: 'I can. Are you all right?'

She said: 'Arthur, look in the book on the table by my big chair, please. I marked a place. What did I mark it with?'

Crossing back, Arthur Winner saw the book closed near the middle on a gold fountain pen and a folded sheet of paper. Drawing both out, he looked at the paper. His mother had written in her still pretty but no longer quite firm script: 1. *keeping up big house* 2. *my medicine – why I don't like calling Reggie Shaw* 3. *Oil burner – not O'Brien* 4. *Ann being a lawyer* 5. *Rector and*



his m. – sunset years 6. L. and sherry. 7. Lawrence? 8. explain to Marjorie P. 9. Maud and bonds.

Arthur Winner called: 'You marked the place with your list, Mother.'

'Well, what a relief! Please don't read it. You couldn't understand it. I meant to speak about the rector and his mother calling on me with his fiancée. That reminded me of a line he'd quoted – misquoted, I was sure. I put a check by it.'

'It's too late. I've read the list,' Arthur Winner said. 'Only about two things aren't clear to me. Most of them I think we've covered.'

'I'm coming down. Don't go on looking at it. I know you're thinking how funny it sounds. Read what I put a check by on that page.'

Arthur Winner took the book up. It was covered in faded green watered silk, a type of binding surely not used for years. Stamped on the cover in worn gold was what he took to be the facsimile of a signature – Robert Browning: a poet, he would think, for years little read. The book, opening, showed him the flyleaf. Written there with time-dimmed ink in a hand he recognized as his father's were the words: *For Miss Harriet Carstairs from her sincere friend Arthur Stanton Winner*. A little lower, the same hand had written: 'O Lyric Love, half-angel and half-bird – ' *Midsummer Eve*, 1893.

Arthur Winner said: 'I've lost your place, I'm afraid. So I don't see what I was to read.'

Downstairs now, his mother said: "'And I shall weigh the same, give life its praise or blame.'" She moved briskly into the room. "'Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old". Well, sometimes I think so. Sometimes I wonder. This Doctor Trowbridge said something to me about sunset years, and then quoted that. He seems very young.'

Exertion had pinkened slightly the clear soft skin of her face, now almost everywhere finely lined, traced with innumerable delicate wrinkles. Not conscious of doing it, she lifted a practised hand, whose once-slender fingers showed arthritic enlargement at the joints, to make sure that she had not disordered her carefully blue-rinsed white hair, carefully dressed under the hairnet – nowadays she had trouble finding white hairnets. Her eyes, a soft brown, rested on Arthur Winner a moment, and she said: 'How stupid of me! I could have been talking to you all that time. I know you have to go, but – give me the list.' Taking her